



Socio-economic impacts of land use change in the Green Triangle and Central Victoria

MEDIA RELEASE

Friday 5th December, 2008

Social impacts of land use change in rural areas identified

The final results of the *Land Use Change* study, which examines socio-economic impacts of land use change in a south-west Victoria and south-east South Australia, are being released today. The study examined land use change involving bluegum plantations, cropping, dairy farming, sheep grazing, beef grazing, viticulture and rural residential expansion.

Findings on the socio-economic changes that accompany these different land use changes have now been released. The study found that land use changed considerably in the study region over 1991 to 2006. Over this period:

- Sheep and lamb numbers fell 29%, from 17.5 million to 12.4 million
- Dairy cow numbers grew 44%, from 293,000 to 416,000
- Beef cattle numbers grew 47%, from 1.0 to 1.5 million
- The area of cereal and oilseed crops grew 103%, from 281,000ha to 571,000ha
- The area of bluegum plantations grew from 670ha to 149,000ha
- The area used for grape growing grew from 3,300ha to 11,700ha

These changes were associated with socio-economic change. In particular:

- Areas experiencing decline in sheep grazing often experienced decline in rural population, higher than average ageing of the rural population, and lower than average household income
- Expansion of viticulture was associated with growth in rural population and jobs
- Expansion of dairy farming contributed to maintaining rural population and employment levels, although increased efficiency of production reduced the total number of people employed in dairy farming over 1991 to 2006
- Expansion of bluegum plantations led to a small net loss of population living on rural properties and to substantial turnover in the people living on rural properties, with farming residents shifting away and new residents – often lifestyle farmers – shifting onto properties
- The impacts of expansion of rural residential properties, or ‘lifestyle farmers’, vary. In some cases, it has led to an increase in the total number of people living in rural areas, increased population turnover, and growth in average household income. However, this depends on whether new residents are permanent or ‘weekenders’; and on other factors

“This report helps us plan for the social impacts of land use change,” said Cr Karen Stephens (Glenelg Shire Council), Chairman of the Advisory Group and Steering Committee. “The results help us understand what we can expect to happen to rural communities and jobs when different types of land use change occur.”

“We now have a better understanding of the socio-economic changes that accompany land use change” said Dr Jacki Schirmer (Australian National University), Project Leader. “In particular, we have identified that increasing efficiency of production and has impacts as significant as changes in the areas of land used for a particular purpose.”

“We have also found that the social impacts of land use change differ for every person. A change that is positive for one person may be negative for another. This diversity of ways people experience land use change is important to understand,” she said.

The report details these and many more detailed results from the *Socio-economic impacts of land use change* research project.. Copies can be downloaded at www.landusechange.net.au. The project is funded by 11 organisations with an interest in land use change, and guided by an advisory group of residents from the study region.

Over December 8-11th public seminars will be held in which the results of the *Land Use Change* project are discussed (see below for seminar locations and times).

For more information:

Dr Jacki Schirmer
Australian National University
Project Leader
Mobile: 0428 254 948

Cr Karen Stephens
Glenelg Shire Council
Project Chair
Mobile: 0417 527 200

Project website: www.landusechange.net.au

***Land Use Change* public seminar series – December 2008**

The results of the *Land Use Change* project are being presented at a series of six public seminars over December 8th-12th. The seminars will discuss the extent of each land use change, how it is perceived and experienced by different people, and what socio-economic changes have accompanied it. Anyone with an interest in the social dimensions of land use change is encouraged to attend the seminars.

Seminar locations and times

Town	Date	Time	Venue
Timboon	Monday Dec 8 th	1-3pm	Timboon District Hall Address: 98 Bailey St, Timboon
Mortlake	Monday Dec 8 th	7-9pm	Mortlake Memorial Hall Address: Shaw St, Mortlake
Hamilton	Tuesday Dec 9 th	2-4pm	DPI Victoria offices, Theatrette Address: Mount Napier Rd, Hamilton
Casterton	Tuesday Dec 9 th	7-9pm	Casterton Town Hall Address: 67 Henty St, Casterton
Penola	Wednesday Dec 10 th	7-9pm	Chardonnay Lodge Address: Riddoch Highway, Coonawarra
Horsham	Thursday Dec 11 th	1-3pm	DPI Victoria, Yellow-gum room Address: 110 Natimuk Rd, Horsham

'Socio-economic impacts of land use change in the Green Triangle and Central Victoria' research project
Research providers: Australian National University, University of Melbourne, and Victorian Govt Department of Primary Industries.

The following organisations have contributed cash or in-kind funding to the project (in alphabetical order):
Central Victorian Farm Plantations, Cooperative Research Centre for Forestry, Corangamite Catchment Management Authority, Forest and Wood Products Australia, Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority, Glenelg Shire Council, Green Triangle Regional Plantation Committee, Moyne Shire Council, Southern Grampians Shire Council, Victorian Government Department of Primary Industries, and Wattle Range Council.
This project is proudly hosted by the Cooperative Research Centre for Forestry